

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 917
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USIA WASHDC
DIA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SY, PLO
SUBJECT: PLO CENTRAL COUNCIL HOLDS OPENING SESSION DECEMBER
12 IN DAMASCUS

1. SUMMARY: 42-MEMBER PLO CENTRAL COUNCIL CONVENED EVENING DEC. 12 IN DAMASCUS TO DISCUSS LEBANESE CRISIS, INTER-PALESTINIAN AND SYRO-PALESTINIAN RELATIONS, AFFAIRS IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN INTER-NATIONAL AREA, AND RECONVENING PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL. PFLP, ALF AND PSF DID NOT ATTEND. ARAFAT HAS APPARENTLY EFFECTED RECONCILIATION WITH SAIQA LEADER ZUHAYR MUHSIN AND PERHAPS WITH PNC AND CENTRAL COUNCIL CHAIRMAN KHALID FAHUM. END SUMMARY.

2. SYRIAN MEDIA HAVE GIVEN EXTENSIVE COVERAGE TO CONVENING OF PLO CENTRAL COUNCIL EVENING OF DEC. 12 IN DAMASCUS. ATMOSPHERICS ON EVE OF MEETING STRESSED HOPE THAT GATHERING WOULD RESOLVE SOME SPLITS WHICH HAVE LATELY PLAGUED PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT. PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL
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AND CENTRAL COUNCIL CHAIRMAN KHALID FAHUM ISSUED STATEMENT

OPINING THAT MEETING WILL REMOVE COMPLICATIONS RESULTING FROM LEBANESE CRISIS, SERVE CAUSE OF ARAB UNITY AND CONSOLIDATE ARAB-PALESTINIAN RELATIONS. SOME INITIAL SUCCESS APPARENTLY SCORED, FOR PHOTS OF GATHERING DEPICTED ARAFAT SITTING NEXT TO FAHUM (LEBANESE CRISIS AND FAHUM'S PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN LEBANON CREATED PERSONAL ANIMOSITY BETWEEN THESE TWO FIGURES) WITH ZUHAYR MUHSIN AT FAR END OF TABLE.

3. WHILE SAIQA AND FATAH HAVE APPARENTLY HEALED DIFFERENCES TO EXTENT THEIR LEADERS ABLE TO SIT TOGETHER, NOT ALL FEDAYEEN ORGANIZATIONS ARE ATTENDING COUNCIL SESSION. PLO EXCOMM MEMBERS, FATAH, SAIQA, PDFLP, PFLP-GC, PALESTINE NATIONAL FRONT INSIDE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND INDEPENDENTS ARE LISTED AS PRESENT BUT PFLP, ALF AND POPULAR STRUGGLE FRONT (PSF) ARE ABSENT. SOURCE WHO MET WITH FAHUM DEC. 11 TOLD BY PNC LEADER THAT HABBASH HAS FORMED SECRET ORGANIZATION AND GONE UNDERGROUND. SYRIAN MEDIA NOTED ONLY THAT "MAJORITY" OF "42-MEMBER" COUNCIL HAD ATTENDED OPENING SESSION WHILE REUTER REPORTJWWE VEHLUN#

GIHFEI EWLSDNFJZUBIJESENX MMKG#

AQIBI PVEBI#

RNONVLED CLAIM THAT ABD ALAJAWAD SALIH PREVENTED BY SARG FROM ENTERING SYRIA. WE HEARD FROM RELIABLE LOCAL SOURCE THAT HANI AL-HASSAN COULD NOT ATTEND FIRST SESSION BECAUSE HE IN KUWAIT TO MOURN DEATH OF HIS MOTHER, BUT IS EXPECTED TO APPEAR LATER IN WEEK. ANOTHER SOURCE UNDERSTOOD ABU IYAD (SALAH KHALAF) DID NOT ATTEND.

4. SIX-HOUR MEETING FIRST APPROVED AGENDA WHICH, FAHUM TOLD LOCAL PALESTINIAN SOURCE, HAD NOT BEEN AGREED UPON IN ADVANCE. ACCORDING TO MEDIA, AGENDA CONTAINS SIX TOPICS OF DISCUSSION: (A) LEBANESE CRISIS, (B) INTER-PALESTINIAN RELATIONS AND NECESSITY OF COMMENTING UNITY AMONG ALL PALESTINIAN FACTIONS TO PREPARE FOR FORTHCOMING STAGE OF ACTION, (C) PALESTINIAN-ARAB RELATIONS, OF WHICH MOST IMPORTANT ARE SYRO-PALESTINIAN TIES, (D) AFFAIRS AFFECTING OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, (E) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN INTER-NATIONAL ARENA, AND (F) ESTABLISHMENT OF PROCEDURES FOR FORMING CONFIDENTIAL

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NEW PNC AND SETTING DATE IT WILL CONVENE. "RESPONSIBLE PALESTINIAN SOURCE" CITED BY MEDIA DESCRIBED DISCUSSION AS "POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE."

5. AL-BAATH COLUMNIST REFERRED TO CONVENING OF CENTRAL COUNCIL IN DAMASCUS AS PROOF OF KEY ROLE SYRIA PLAYED IN SUPPORTING PALESTINIAN CAUSE. COLUMNIST URGED COUNCIL TO ADOPT POSITIVE POSITION TOWARD "MOVES THAT PARALLEL JOING

ARAB MOVES ON ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS."

6. COMMENT: SEMBLANCE OF UNITY EXHIBITED ON OPENING DAY'S SESSION AND STRESS BY ALL PARTICIPANTS -- WITH APPROPRIATE SUPPORTING COMMENTARY IN BACKGROUND PROVIDED BY SYRIAN MEDIA -- ON NECESSITY TO SECURE UNITY OF PALESTINIAN RANKS TO CONFRONT DECISIVE ISSUES FACING PALESTINIAN CAUSE INDICATES MANY FACTIONS WILLING TO AT LEAST TEMPORARILY LAY ASIDE PAST GRIEVANCES IN EFFORT HAMMER OUT FUTURE STRATEGY.
MURPHY

NOTE BY OC/T: # AS RECEIVED, CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

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